vinetur

Trump’s ban on Canadian imports threatens U.S. liquor shelves and whey supplies

Economists say the policy will disrupt bars, specialty shops and protein supplement sellers more than it raises nationwide prices

Tuesday, November 3, 2026



President Donald Trump’s ban on selected Canadian imports is expected to make some alcoholic drinks and whey-based protein products harder to find in the United States, with economists saying the measure is more likely to disrupt availability and distribution than to lift overall inflation.

The move was announced on Sept. 29 and came after the administration imposed 50% tariffs on many Canadian goods during the summer. According to HuffPost, which interviewed three economists about the policy, the ban applies to all alcoholic beverages from Canada, molasses, nonalcoholic beer and spirits, and whey, a dairy byproduct widely used in protein supplements.

The economists said the latest restriction should be viewed in the context of the earlier tariffs. Josh Stillwagon, an economics professor and division chair at Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts, told HuffPost that the direct effect on national prices is likely to be limited because the earlier 50% tariff had already made many of those imports difficult to sell profitably in the U.S. market. In his view, the new ban matters more because it removes products entirely, leaving some consumers and businesses without the option to pay more for them.

That distinction is especially important in the beverage business. Bars, restaurants and retail shops that rely on Canadian spirits and beer could face gaps on shelves and drink menus, while competing products made in the United States may gain pricing power if imported rivals disappear. Businesses that focus on limited-distribution labels appear to be more exposed than large chains or stores that carry broad national inventories.

Michael Klein, a professor of international economic affairs at the Fletcher School at Tufts University and executive editor of Econofact, told HuffPost that some goods will simply no longer be available, citing Canadian Club whiskey as one example. He also said research shows domestic products that compete with tariff-hit imports often rise in price as competition falls.

The pressure may not be distributed evenly across the alcohol market. Fergus Hodgson, director of Econ Americas, told HuffPost that hospitality businesses with deep ties to Canadian beverage suppliers are likely to feel the most strain. He said that could include businesses near the U.S.-Canada border, companies with long-standing supply relationships, and operators whose customers are loyal to Canadian brands.

There may be a partial workaround for larger alcohol companies. Hodgson said brands with enough scale and money could continue shipping spirits across the border in bulk form, such as tanks, barrels or plastic totes, and then bottle the product in the United

States. Stillwagon said the rules include an exception that allows bulk alcohol transportation, which could help bigger companies preserve access to the U.S. market if the ban lasts for more than a short period.

That option is less realistic for small Canadian craft distillers and other niche producers. As a result, the sharpest effect in the beverage sector could fall on bars and specialty retailers that depend on small Canadian brands, as well as on the Canadian companies themselves, which may lose access to U.S. consumers while larger rivals adapt their logistics.

The whey ban could also reach well beyond grocery shelves. Canada supplies most of the whey imported into the United States and has been the fastest-growing source of those imports, according to the HuffPost report. Economists said that makes whey one of the categories most likely to face meaningful supply pressure.

Stillwagon said the growing demand for protein products in recent years has already pushed the whey market higher, and the ban could make that worse. He said smoothie shops, gyms and businesses that sell protein supplements may see their costs rise as supply tightens. The broader inflation effect may remain small, but for companies built around protein drinks and supplements, sourcing could become more difficult.

The trade measures may also deepen economic damage outside the goods affected directly by the ban. Stillwagon told HuffPost that the ongoing trade conflict with Canada has already caused a major decline in Canadian tourism to the United States. He said travel has recovered somewhat over the past year but remains about 25% below 2024 levels, and that each new negative headline is likely to prolong consumer boycotts among some Canadian travelers.

He said the burden is likely to fall hardest on border states that trade heavily with Canada, including Maine, Vermont, upstate New York and Michigan. Klein said winter destinations such as Arizona and Florida could also feel the effects because many Canadians spend part of the season in those states, and some areas have already seen fewer visitors from Canada.

The economists also said any future reversal of the policy would not fully solve the problem right away. Stillwagon told HuffPost that if Congress were to repeal the bans, the physical movement of goods could resume within days, but rebuilding contracts, restoring inventories and restarting normal trade patterns would likely take a couple of quarters. He said the larger obstacle is confidence, because businesses may hesitate to resume production and cross-border trade if they believe policy can change again without warning.

Klein gave a similar assessment, saying the United States is increasingly viewed as an unreliable trade partner. That could leave Canadian suppliers, U.S. importers and beverage distributors reluctant to rebuild relationships quickly, even if the formal restrictions are lifted.